

Message Text

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51

ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8554

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 09617

EXDIS

FOR EA/HABIB AND MILLER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, VS
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH GVN NEGOTIATING HEAD

REF: STATE 084134

1. GVN MINISTER OF STATE AND CHIEF OF THE RVN MISSION TO THE PEACE TALKS NGUYEN XUAN PHONG, REQUESTED TO CALL ON EMBOFF TO DISCUSS CURRENT SITUATION. WE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE OCCASION TO PASS HIM SUBSTANCE OF REFTEL AND PHONG EXPRESSED THANKS FOR MORAL SUPPORT. PHONG SAID HE HAD ATTEMPTED THROUGH A VARIETY OF WAYS TO GET HIS VIEWS BACK TO GVN, BUT DID NOT THINK THEY HAD ANY IMPACT IN SAIGON. HE HAD NOT RECENTLY RE-EMPHASIZED HIS VIEWS TO BAC, WHOM PHONG DID NOT CONSIDER PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE. IN ADDITION, PHONG DID NOT THINK THAT PRIME MINISTER CAN WOULD BE ABLE TO FOCUS ON AN URGENT POLITICAL INITIATIVE, THE GVN IS NOW A "BASKET OF CRABS".

2. PHONG SAID HE HOPED SOON TO GET GUIDANCE ON HIS MISSION FROM SAIGON, AND THEN WOULD MAKE A QUICK TRIP TO WASHINGTON TO SEE MESSRS. HABIB AND MILLER.

3. PHONG THOUGHT THE CRUCIAL ACTION NOW WOULD BE
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CONGRESS' VOTE ON AID TO VIETNAM. PHONG THOUGHT THAT

IF CONGRESS VOTED HUMANITARIAN BUT NOT MILITARY AID,
PRESIDENT THEIU WOULD STEP DOWN AND GO INTO EXILE.
PHONG THOUGHT THAT MOST LIKELY THIEU WOULD THEN TURN
THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT OVER TO A COMMITTEE OF
GENERALS RATHER THAN ANY SINGLE MILITARY OR CIVILIAN
LEADER.

4. PHONG THOUGHT THAT THE PRINCIPAL MOTIVE BEHIND THE
CURRENT FRENCH ACTIVITY WAS THE DESIRE "TO DO SOME-
THING". GIVEN THEIR PREVIOUS ROLE IN INDOCHINA, THE
FRENCH COULD NOT IGNORE THE SITUATION. THEY WISH TO
HELP THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE BY SOME INITIATIVE WHICH
APPEARED TO REFLECT THE "NEW REALITIES". PHONG ALSO
COMMENTED THAT FOR MANY FRENCH THERE WAS A STRONG
ELEMENT OF WISHFUL THINKING WHICH BLINDED THEM TO
REALITIES, THERE WAS ALSO AN ELEMENT OF BAD FAITH,
SINCE FRENCH ATTEMPTED TO CONCEAL CONCERN FOR FRENCH
INTERESTS BEHIND PROTESTATIONS OF CONCERN FOR THE
VIETNAMESE.

STONE

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